

Five themes in Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson's state of the city speech

BY JON WILLING , OTTAWA SUN

FIRST POSTED: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2014 08:39 AM EST | UPDATED: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2014 08:17 PM EST

Beautification

Watson wants more pizzaz under the bridges of highways and has received the province's blessing to create street art.

He cited the Little Italy mural under the highway overpass on Preston St. as an example of how "dingy" underbellies of bridges can be brightened up.

And the mayor is challenging businesses to donate supplies to create the artwork under a program that will begin this summer.

The mayor still has garbage on his mind after rallying the city last year to keep the downtown clean.

After the city tested recycling bins on Elgin St., the mayor wants to expand the pilot to Laurier Ave. E. between Nicholas and Charlotte streets.

Design

Watson believes the city is getting its planning policies in order, so it's time to challenge architects to create a more eye-catching skyline.

"One just has to look at some of the blank walls - some 27 stories high - that dot our skyline to see the potential for doing better," Watson said in his speech. "For 2014, we will continue to provide leadership and seek excellence in architecture and built form."

It's a topic that has come up at planning committee with councillors urging architects to be functional and creative. No longer, it seems, are politicians settling for tall, narrow boxes.

Watson says the city is doing its part by designing an attractive Arts Court complex beside the Rideau Centre and an innovation centre at Bayview Yards.

The people's City Hall

More artwork, new galleries a refrigerated outdoor rink.

These are the additions to City Hall in recent years and Watson wants to continue promoting the municipal headquarters as the people's place, more than simply an administrative centre.

Watson says there were 179 festivals and activities at City Hall in 2013 compared to 77 the previous year.

In 2014 he'll bring back the Rural Expo, making it an annual event. In June the city will host the YMCA Biz Expo, showing off the talent of local entrepreneurs. And when Doors Open Ottawa happens in June, he wants staff from various city services at City Hall to tell people about their work.

Watson is also recommending the city create a Nelson Mandela Square outside City Hall's heritage building at Lisgar and Elgin streets to commemorate the late South African leader.

Infrastructure

Watson said new recreation centres will open in 2014, including the Richcraft Sensplex East and the Minto Recreation Complex in Barrhaven.

Work that continues at Lansdowne Park. TD Place will be ready for professional football and soccer this summer, Watson said.

There hasn't been much noise lately on the city's Ottawa River Action Plan, whose cornerstone project is a \$175-million sewage tunnel that intercepts sewage overflows during heavy rainfall.

Watson said the upper-tier governments need to financially support the project in 2014 if the city wants the sewage tunnel built at the same time - and finish roughly at the same time - as the LRT tunnel.

"It's now up to them," Watson said. "This will be the year that they will decide whether or not to fund the final phase of the plan."

Watson said he has his first official meeting with new Gatineau Mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin next Wednesday and he expects the Ottawa River to be a topic of discussion.

The LRT tunnel, by the way, is almost 10% complete.

Transportation

Watson said the city will begin the environmental assessment in 2014 for \$3 billion in rapid transit extensions.

Like the sewage tunnel, there is still no concrete commitment from the upper-tier governments to help fund a project to bring rail service to Orléans, Bayshore Shopping Centre, Algonquin College and Riverside South.

While that study gets off the ground, the city will break ground on a \$76-million Transitway extension between Bayshore and Moodie Drive.

Across the city, cyclists and pedestrians will welcome another groundbreaking when work begins on a bridge over the Rideau River connecting Somerset St. E. with Donald St.

It's not all rosy for motorists, however. Widening work on Hwy. 417 will continue.

"I'm sure everyone can understand and appreciate that this is short-term pain for long-term gain," Watson said.

Another piece of transportation research is in the works this year: A feasibility study on a downtown truck tunnel.

Twitter: @jonathanwilling

Share

Options

Font Size

- [Smaller](#)
- [Normal](#)
- [Larger](#)

Viewer Comments

on

Sounds

Flick

Translate posts and comments.



ScribbleLive is powering generation now with its live CMS. [Learn more](#)

- [Options](#)
- [Info](#)

- Share
-
-
-

The State of Our City: Mayor Watson's annual address

- [All Posts](#)
- [Writer Posts](#)
- [Media Posts](#)



January 22 at 8:41 AM
[Jon Willing](#) @JonathanWilling

Family of victim in [#OCTranspo](#) /Via crash sues city, estate of deceased bus driver: [ottawasun.com/2014/01/21/bus... #OTTPoli](#)
retweeted by [SunCityHall](#)
[ReplyRetweetFavorite](#)



I should mention, the council meeting starts at 10 a.m.
by [Jon Willing](#) January 22 at 9:31 AM



January 22 at 9:41 AM
[Jon Willing](#) @JonathanWilling
Follow the Hof, [@chrishofley](#), a busy guy this morning, rising from the chilly [South St. protest](#)

SPONSORED LINKS



Think Inside the Box

Your one stop shop for packing supplies!
[www.patafies.com](#)



LUNCH BUFFET

Ottawa's 1st Greek Buffet!

www.houseofgreek.ca



Let's Get Growing!

See Our Weekly Specials!

JA LAPORTE

NURSERIES

[See All Sponsored Links](#)